

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 ACDA-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01 DHA-02 SCCT-01 IO-13 /093 W

----- 090945

R 211300Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6635

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 11512

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, FR, XF, SY, LE

SUBJECT: GROMYKO AND SYTENKO ON LEBANON, MIDDLE EAST

1. SUMMARY. GROMYKO COMMENTS TO SAUVAGNARGES PROVIDE CONFIRMATION OF SOVIET CONCERN OVER LEBANESE SITUATION, AND INDICATE SOVIETS STILL UNHAPPILY STUCK ON HORNS OF THEIR DILEMMA. HE INSISTED ON NECESSITY FOR SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL, DEFENDED PLO, AND SAID SOLUTION TO PROBLEM SHOULD ENTAIL SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL, CEASE-FIRE FOLLOWED BY CONFERENCE OF ALL PARTIES, AND NON-INTERVENTION BY OUTSIDE FORCES. SYTENKO SAID THAT MINOR ADJUSTMENTS OF ISRAELI 1967 BORDERS MIGHT BE POSSIBLE PROVIDED ISRAEL FIRST AGREED TO RETURN TO ITS 1967 BOUNDARIES. END SUMMARY.

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2. FRENCH AMB DE LEUSSE HAS PROVIDED FOLLOWING

RUNDOWN ON ME PORTION OF GROMYKO-SAUVAGNARGUES TALKS

JULY 16:

--GROMYKO WAS FIRMLY INSISTENT ON SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL, APPEARED AS PROTECTOR OF PLO, SAID IN EFFECT THAT ANYTHING WAS BETTER THAN FIGHTING LEFTISTS IN LEBANON. FOR PALESTINIANS, SAID GROMYKO, SITUATION WAS MATTER OF LIFE OR DEATH.

--GROMYKO OUTLINED THREE ELEMENTS NECESSARY FOR SOLUTION OF LEBANESE CRISIS--SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON, CEASE-FIRE FOLLOWED BY A CONFERENCE OF ALL PARTIES, AND NON-INTERVENTION BY ANY OUTSIDE FORCE. GROMYKO SAID BASIC NEED IS TO RESTORE CONDITIONS IN LEBANON TO WHAT THEY WERE PRIOR TO ENTRY OF SYRIAN TROOPS.

3. SAUVAGNARGUES AGREED THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO INTERVENTION BY OUTSIDE PARTIES. HE EXPLAINED THAT FRENCH OFFER TO SEND TROOPS WAS PREDICATED ON TWO CONDITIONS: ESTABLISHMENT OF A CEASE-FIRE AND ACCEPTANCE BY ALL PARTIES, INCLUDING INTERESTED PARTIES OUTSIDE REGION SUCH AS USSR. SINCE THESE PRECONDITIONS OBVIOUSLY NOT MET, FRENCH OFFER WAS MOOT. SAUVAGNARGUES THEN OBSERVED THAT IN ANY EVENT, FRANCE HAS NO MEANS OF INTERVENTION AND ASSUMES SAME IS TRUE OF USSR. GROMYKO SURPRISED FRENCH BY TAKING ISSUE WITH LATTER STATEMENT. TO THE CONTRARY, SOVIET UNION DOES HAVE MEANS TO INTERVENE, HE SAID.

4. BRITISH AMBASSADOR SMITH DISCUSSED MIDDLE EAST WITH MFA NEAR EASTERN COUNTRIES CHIEF SYTENKO JULY 15. HE REPORTED THAT SYTENKO WAS SEIZED WITH "PESSIMISTIC RESIGNATION" OVER LEBANESE SITUATION AND DENIED THAT ANY NEW SOVIET INITIATIVE IN LEBANON WAS IN THE WORKS. SYTENKO SAID KHADDAM VISIT WAS AT SYRIAN INITIATIVE AND THAT KHADDAM HAD TOLD SOVIETS SYRIANS WOULD PULL OUT AS SOON AS THEY COULD.

5. SYTENKO FELT THAT GENEVA WAS STILL PLACE TO SEEK OVERALL ME SETTLEMENT, BUT HE DID NOT SEEM ANXIOUS TO TALK ABOUT THE OVERALL ME PROBLEM DUE TO HIS PREOCCUPATION WITH LEBANON. HE DID SHOW SOME FLEXIBILITY--
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UNUSUAL FOR HIM--ON POSSIBLE ISRAELI BORDER ADJUSTMENTS, HOWEVER, SAYING THAT MINOR CHANGES MIGHT BE PERMISSIBLE, BUT ONLY AFTER ISRAEL FIRST RETURNED TO ITS 1967 BOUNDARIES.

6. COMMENT. REPORTS TALLY WITH OUR OWN PERCEPTION OF CURRENT SOVIET PESSIMISM RE LEBANON. IN ANY CASE, GROMYKO'S COMMENT ON INTERVENTION IS WORTH NOTING AS REMINDER THAT USSR IS GREAT POWER AND FRANCE IS NOT,

THUS GIVING HIS STATEMENT ELEMENT OF IMPLICIT THREAT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTERVENTION, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MOSCOW11512
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760281-0257
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760737/aaaabgdq.tel
Line Count: 117
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 APR 2004 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <19 AUG 2004 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GROMYKO AND SYTENKO ON LEBANON, MIDDLE EAST
TAGS: PFOR, UR, FR, XF, SY, LE, (GROMYKO, ANDREI ANDREYEVICH), (SAUVAGNARGES, JEAN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006